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SUBJECT: SWEDISH NOTES ON SEPTEMBER GYMNICH AND GAERC

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Classified By: Pol Briana Olsen for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

11. (C) Summary: European Foreign Ministers will discuss the Middle East, Afghanistan and Pakistan (AfPak), and improving the EU as a global actor at their informal Gymnich meeting in Stockholm 4-5 September. EU Secretariat Deputy Director Jonas Wendel and officer Wouter Vidlund, seconded from the Dutch MFA, told poloffs August 31 that the entire afternoon of September 4 is reserved for informal discussions of the Middle East and prospects for peace. Syria and progress toward establishing an Association Agreement with Damascus will be raised if time allows. Iran is a distant third on the Gymnich agenda, but will be the subject of dinner discussions at the General Affairs and External Relations Council (GAERC) September 14-15. September 5 will bring a structured discussion of the EU's AfPak strategy. The strategy aims to better coordinate and focus EU efforts in the region and the Swedes aim to have it formally adopted in October, thus Afghanistan will also be discussed at the September GAERC. Ministers will also engage in quiet discussions of the transformation of EU foreign policy institutions under the Lisbon Treaty at this week's Gymnich. The Swedes have announced the agenda for the September GAERC, to include General Affairs discussion of enlargement, and External Relations discussion of Afghanistan, Iran, Southern Caucasus and Sri Lanka. The Swedes wish to use the GAERC to create momentum toward an Association Agreement for Georgia, and enhanced trade relationships with Azerbaijan and Armenia under the umbrella of the Eastern Partnership Program. End Summary.

Israeli-Palestinian Peace Process

12. (C) Wendel explained that no papers were being prepared for a free-ranging discussion of the Israeli-Palestinian situation on September 4. High Representative Javier Solana will give a readout of his recent trip to the region and ministers will inform Swedish Foreign Minister Carl Bildt of their viewpoints in the runup to the UN General Assembly meetings in September. The EU anticipates it will play a supporting role in any eventual peace negotiations, not a leading role. Because, in Stockholm's view, not much has changed on the ground since the ministers' July meeting, new formal conclusions are not necessary. Wendel also stressed that there are no plans to issue a formal condemnation of an allegedly anti-Semitic article published in the Swedish press (reftel), as the Israeli newspaper Haaretz reported August 31, and he denied that Bildt and Italian Foreign Minister Frattini discussed such a resolution. Wendel noted, however, that Stockholm eagerly awaited reports from Special Envoy Mitchell's meetings in London.

13. (C) Wendel said that there is monthly demand for discussion and conclusions on the peace process at the GAERC, but Bildt is against having it turn into a skipping record. According to Wendel, Bildt wanted the peace process on the agenda for the Gymnich in order to avoid issuing conclusions. The EU is waiting to see if a credible government emerges

from the inter-Palestinian Authority reconciliation process. At the same time, the EU has problems engaging with the new Israeli government. Wendel said Israel is sending mixed signals and the appropriate interlocutors are difficult to target. In total, the EU wants to take on a supporting role, but is trying to figure out what that is exactly.

Syria and Iran

¶4. (C) If time remains, Syria will be discussed in hopes of assuaging Dutch and Czech reservations about Damascus' human rights record and achieving consensus on concluding an EU Association Agreement (AA) with Syria. The discussion will be prepared in the Coreper meeting on September 3, and will probably be informed by a report from the IAEA on the Syrian and Iranian nuclear programs due out this week. Bildt would like to confirm the EU's AA consensus at the September GAERC, with the aim to sign it into effect at the October GAERC. Wendel explained that the AA was not directly linked to the peace process, but aimed to put Syria on the same footing as other participants in the EU's Union of the Mediterranean. The long term aim of the outreach, however, is to encourage Syrian engagement with the west rather than with Tehran. Iran will be the dinner topic for ministers at the GAERC September 14, but time will probably not allow it to be addressed at the Gymnich.

AfPak and Iraq

¶5. (C) Ministers will review the main elements of the Council

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Secretariat's new AfPak Strategy September 5. Bildt will brief on his recent travel to Afghanistan and ministers' viewpoints will inform the final content of the Strategy, which is still on tap to be adopted in October. Wendel characterized current EU involvement in Afghanistan as "too much action, not enough focus," and said the strategy would coordinate the EU's disparate efforts there. The Council must first overcome European Commission objections to changes to its current efforts in Afghanistan. To date Brussels' relationship with Pakistan lacked strategy altogether and was hindered by "Pakistani pride", Wendel noted, adding that some of the EU personnel working on Afghanistan could begin working on Pakistan.

¶6. (SBU) Wendel said the Turks will lead the informal lunch discussion on Iraq. Such an opportunity is intended to give them a taste of the EU, and also give them some limelight as an EU prospective member.

Lisbon Treaty

¶7. (C) Gymnich participants will review plans for the EU's post-Lisbon foreign policy institutions under the benign heading "EU as a global actor." Preparatory papers outlining plans for the External Service have drawn strong member state reactions; discussion will be somewhat hampered by the fact that the new High Representative for Foreign Affairs and the External Service have not been set. Wendel noted that such administrative bargaining is not Bildt's strong suit, but that he must take up the project so that if the Irish vote yes on October 2, transition can begin toward the new institutions. Wendel opined that the EU Presidency may lose effectiveness in foreign affairs after the Irish referendum, but that the extent of the weakness would depend in large part on the new High Representative and on how much authority he/she would want to assume before January 1. Despite his aversion to administration, however, Bildt has relatively unilaterally revamped the GAERC structure, garnering personal complaints from several ministers and staffs. Beginning in September, GAERCs will begin with a working dinner on the Monday evening, and Tuesdays will feature a solid block of

meetings from 9 until 1.

September GAERC Agenda

-- (C) Southern Caucasus: The Swedes have placed Georgia, Azerbaijan and Armenia on the September 15 GAERC agenda. While no formal conclusions are expected, Stockholm wants to use discussions to create a "positive atmosphere" for deepening relations with these countries under the EU's Eastern Partnership Program, per Wendel. Ideally, negotiation of an Association Agreement with Georgia could begin, and closer trade relations explored for Azerbaijan and Armenia. Member States are currently split on the issue, with some objecting to deepening relations with some Eastern Partnership members and not with others. Underlying these objections may also be member state fear of an adverse reaction from Moscow as well as technical questions about whether and AA would apply South Ossetia and Abkhazia as well as to Georgia proper.

-- (SBU) Sri Lanka: At the request of Denmark, basic conclusions will be issued expressing concern over the deteriorating human rights situation among Tamils in Sri Lanka, urging the Sri Lankan government to take appropriate measures.

-- (C) Enlargement: Including this topic took all by surprise, according to Wendel, but Bildt wants to push forward Albania's lagging membership application. At the last GAERC in July, all Member States agreed to keep Albania and Iceland on track. Germany, according to Wendel, wants to avoid discussion of enlargement until after its domestic elections in order to prevent xenophobic rhetoric. Germany is key to moving forward with Albania's accession, but electoral irregularities still must be addressed by the Albanian government.

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